

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the Application.

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-28, 48, 83, and 159 (cancelled).

Claims 29-47, 49-82, 84-99, 140-158, and 160-175 (withdrawn).

Claim 100 (Presently amended): A system wherein a user places an order for at least one provider and a degree of matching between each order-provider pairing is computed, the system comprising:

a data storage device to receive and store program code and user information including provider information that specifies provider criteria and order information that specifies order criteria for that particular order;

at least one virtual provider that is created by matching provider information of a particular provider with order information of a particular order; and

a knowledge base which is stored in a data storage device which may be said data storage device, which is separate from the user information and separate from the program code, which contains facts and rules for problem solving, and which contains information on which to base requests for information by the system to obtain the user information.

Claim 101 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the data storage device for the knowledge base is separate from the data storage device which receives and stores user information.

Claim 102 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the requests for information result in the system obtaining at least one of the user information, the provider information, the order information, and refinements of the foregoing.

Claim 103 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the knowledge base contains at least two different categories of information including (a) basic information used by the system to construct initial questionnaires used to obtain input of initial user, order, and provider information; and (b) correction information used by the system to construct verification materials used for corrections when the system determines that verification of user-provided information is appropriate.

Claim 104 (Previously presented): The system of claim 103, wherein the correction information includes rules by which verification materials including at least questions are selected for verification and correction of previously entered provider, order, and user information.

Claim 105 (Previously presented): The system of claim 104, wherein the verification materials are constructed in a real time manner by the system question by question when the system determines that verification of user-provided information is appropriate.

Claim 106 (Previously presented): The system of claim 105, wherein the verification materials include multiple-choice questions and a plurality of answers to each respective question.

Claim 107 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the requests for information comprise at least one of questionnaires, application forms, interview scripts and other verification request.

Claim 108 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the requests for information are organized in a plurality of levels so that the response to one or more requests for information in one level generates one or more requests for information in another level.

Claim 109 (Previously presented): The system of claim 108, wherein the requests for information are organized into at least three levels.

Claim 110 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the system makes at least one request for information from at least one responder, receives at least one response from a respective responder, and determines which particular request for information was satisfied without the respective responder identifying themselves.

Claim 111 (Previously presented): The system of claim 110, wherein the system includes a plurality of hidden codes to identify the respective responder.

Claim 112 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a knowledge base system that updates the information contained in the knowledge base automatically so that the knowledge base is an adaptive knowledge base.

Claim 113 (Previously presented): The system of claim 112, wherein the knowledge base is automatically updated to provide updates with or without an acceptance decision by a human

monitor, and wherein the updates may be used as a basis for obtaining additional user information.

Claim 114 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a reporting system that at least one of (a) sends status messages to the user regarding the status of a particular order in the system, and (b) sends status messages to providers regarding the status of the virtual providers relating to respective providers in the system, wherein the reporting system advises at least one of users and providers when the knowledge base is automatically updated, and wherein at least one of users and providers input additional information into the system in response to the advisories.

Claim 115 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a scoring system for each of the at least one virtual provider that compares the provider information of a particular provider and the order information of a particular order, and that determines a score for each respective informational pair for each said at least one virtual provider reflecting the degree of matching between the criteria of the provider information of a particular provider and the order information of a particular order.

Claim 116 (Previously presented): The system of claim 115, wherein the score is computed from a predetermined formula which includes at least one of user-specified criteria, user-specified weighting factors, and user-specified relative importance of respective criteria.

Claim 117 (Previously presented): The system of claim 115, wherein the scoring system determines scores based in part on degree of clustering of keywords in information provided.

Claim 118 (Previously presented): The system of claim 117, wherein the degree of clustering of keywords in information provided is at least one of (a) information provided by at least one of the user, the at least one provider, and a third party and (b) information contained in at least one of an application, a biography, and a resume submitted by the at least one provider.

Claim 119 (Previously presented): The system of claim 115, wherein the scoring system considers the degree of matching through multiple steps including receiving and inputting user information and optionally requesting the user information.

Claim 120 (Previously presented): The system of claim 115, further comprising a rescoring system that automatically corrects the scores based on correction factors.

Claim 121 (Previously presented): The system of claim 120, wherein the correction factors are derived from at least one of interviewing the provider, objective testing of the provider, and reference checking of the provider's information.

Claim 122 (Presently presented): The system of claim 119 ~~[[100]]~~, wherein the system further comprises

a management system that tracks each virtual provider through the multiple steps; and ~~[[b)]]~~

a sequencing system that specifies contents of each step of the multiple steps.

Claim 123 (Previously presented): The system of claim 122, further comprising a timer that allocates a pre-determined time to complete at least one of the multiple steps.

Claim 124 (Previously presented): The system of claim 123, wherein the system sends an alarm indicating that a predetermined time period has lapsed without requisite action.

Claim 125 (Previously presented): The system of claim 124, wherein the alarm is sent to at least one individual recipient selected from the group consisting of the user, the provider, a third party, and an operator of the system, the alarm is classified as either a warning alarm or an urgent alarm, and the alarm is sent to the at least one individual recipient based on whether the respective at least one individual recipient has access to warning alarms or to urgent alarms.

Claim 126 (Previously presented): The system of claim 122, wherein the contents of each step of the multiple steps at least includes instructions to at least one of (a) the user regarding the input of additional user information and (b) the provider regarding the input of additional provider information, and wherein the sequencing system provides default content of a step.

Claim 127 (Previously presented): The system of claim 126, wherein the default content is modified by the user.

Claim 128 (Previously presented): The system of claim 122, further comprising a device to request information which is one of (a) an avatar which is an animated image generated automatically by the system or (b) a simulated interviewer.

Claim 129 (Previously presented): The system of claim 122, further comprising a device to accept verbal input, and wherein information is provided as verbal input and the system converts the verbal input to digital form.

Claim 130 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a device to request information which is one of (a) an avatar which is an animated image generated automatically by the system or (b) a simulated interviewer.

Claim 131 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a device to accept verbal input, and wherein information is provided as verbal input and the system converts the verbal input to digital form.

Claim 132 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a reporting system that at least one of (a) sends status messages to the user regarding the status of a particular order in the system, and (b) sends status messages to providers regarding the status of the virtual providers relating to respective providers in the system.

Claim 133 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a billing system that bills the user based on at least one of (a) number of providers that have been matched with said user, (b) number of orders during a period of time from said user, and (c) the number of iterations.

Claim 134 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the user is a prospective employer and the provider is one of a prospective employee or independent contractor.

Claim 135 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the user is a prospective patient and the provider is one of a prospective doctor or dentist.

Claim 136 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the user is a human shopper and the provider is a supplier of one of companionship, goods, or services.

Claim 137 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the degree of matching between each order-provider pairing is computed without elimination of any providers to obtain a best fit.

Claim 138 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a correction system that automatically corrects the scores provided by the scoring system based on correction factors.

Claim 139 (Previously presented): The system of claim 138, wherein the correction factors are derived from at least one of interviewing the provider, objective testing of the provider, and reference checking regarding the provider's information.